

# revise the plan

## Overview

The final step in the mitigation planning process is to determine whether you need to make changes to the planning process or the mitigation plan. You will start with an evaluation of the factual underpinnings of the mitigation strategy: the risk assessment and the capability assessment. Using the results of the evaluations of the process and projects completed in Step 3, and taking into consideration the factors to be discussed under Task A below, you will determine whether you need to revise or update your mitigation plan or planning process.

The frequency of conducting a plan evaluation depends upon the speed and the intensity at which changes are occurring. For example, if your community is experiencing significant growth, or if you have experienced recent or frequent hazard or disaster events, this evaluation may have to be conducted more frequently. *Keep in mind, however, that DMA 2000 regulations require that local plans be reviewed and updated at least every five years, and state plans at least every three years, for a state or jurisdiction to remain eligible for assistance.*

## Procedures & Techniques

Planning is an ongoing process, and your plan should be treated as a living document that must grow and adapt in order to keep pace with the community's growth and change as these issues affect hazard vulnerability, and with changes that may be external to the community but that affect the planning process. An annual "scan of the horizon" should be done, so that emerging trends in data availability or collection, land use and development, technology, and other factors can be documented. Just prior to the three- or five-year point, these annual observations should be evaluated to determine what types of changes should be made to your planning process and to the plan document. The results of your evaluations should be re-programmed back into each phase of the planning process and should yield decisions on how (or whether) to update each section of your plan.



## **Task A. Review those factors that affect your community's planning context.**

Evaluating the following factors will help you determine what changes to the plan document are warranted. Extensive or widespread changes in any one of these categories may signal a need to reconsider some or all of your plan's fundamental assumptions.

*1. Revisit the risk assessment to incorporate updated estimates of cost of living and replacement costs, new scientific data on hazard areas, the effect of hazards on the community, changes in growth patterns, and, particularly, reductions in vulnerability due to completion of projects.*

Use **Worksheet #4: Revisit Your Risk Assessment** to complete this task. See *Understanding Your Risks* (FEMA 386-2) to review information on hazards and estimating losses.

- **Shifts in development.** The planning team should determine whether there are changes in development patterns that could influence the effects of hazards in your community or create additional risks. One common example of this is when upstream growth in a given watershed affects flood characteristics downstream in your community. For example, in Hazardville, coastal development caused the Planning Department to undertake a coastal development plan. The effects of erosion, wave action, and tidal surge hazards will be considered in this development plan, and corresponding policies and/or mitigation projects should be considered.
- **Areas affected by recent disasters.** Recent hazard events or disasters can provide new information about the ways in which your community can be affected. Compare the effects of the event against what the loss estimation analysis led you to expect.
- **New studies or technologies.** What have recent hydrologic, watershed, traffic, or demographic studies revealed about your community? Studies such as these may provide additional information about your community. You already should be continually researching mitigation techniques to discover whether new technologies or methods are being used.



- **Re-estimate losses.** For projects that have not yet been implemented, any new information the planning team has gathered should be used to recalculate losses or revise the benefit-cost analysis originally prepared. See *Understanding Your Risks* (FEMA 386-2) for the methodologies and considerations used to estimate losses.

**2. Revisit your capability assessment to determine changes in laws, authorities, community and state resources, and availability of financial and technical tools that may affect what you can do.**

Additionally, political will and priorities can change with the election cycle. See *Developing the Mitigation Plan* (FEMA 386-3) for more information on how to update your capability assessment.

- **Changes in community, state, or federal laws, policies, plans, or funding.** The strengthening, relaxing, or addition of land use, environmental, or other government regulations may present additional challenges or opportunities to the community.
- **Changes in the socioeconomic fabric of the community.** Broad social transformations often have repercussions on the community's sequence of mitigation priorities and the implementation of projects. Recessions, booming economies, cost of living increases, changes in the political climate, demographic shifts, or environmental justice issues may have some influence on the way mitigation is executed in your community. On a smaller scale, changes within the community, such as the departure of a large employer, may alter the socioeconomic balance.
- **Other changing conditions.** Have the successes achieved over the past few years created a political environment that may allow the planning team to propose a new mitigation initiative that would not have had the political support necessary earlier?



**The review process**  
can be easier if you keep up  
with annual reports.



Risk Assessment Steps	Questions	YES	NO	COMMENTS
Identify hazards	Are there new hazards that can affect your community?		✓	
Profile hazard events	Are new historical records available?		✓	
	Are additional maps or new hazard studies available?	✓		Recently completed maps and studies showing vulnerability of the new coastal development to erosion and tidal surge are available.
	Have chances of future events (along with their magnitude, extent, etc.) changed?		✓	
	Have recent and future development in the community been checked for their effect on hazard areas?	✓		
Inventory assets	Have inventories of existing structures in hazard areas been updated?	✓		
	Is future land development accounted for in the inventories?	✓		The Planning Department is preparing a coastal development plan to ensure that any future development is set back far enough to be outside the erosion zones and the coastal high hazard areas. Current and future road configurations will also be studied to ensure adequate evacuation times before hurricane events.
	Are there any new special high-risk populations?	✓		Coastal residents and business owners.
Estimate losses	Have loss estimates been updated to account for recent changes?	✓		

*If you answered "Yes" to any of the above questions, review your data and update your risk assessment information accordingly.*



## **Task B. Analyze your findings and determine whether to revise your planning process or mitigation strategy.**

The planning team should use its new knowledge to identify the areas of the plan or planning process that should be changed. Some aspects of the planning process may warrant a briefer treatment the second time around, while others, because of additional knowledge or more readily available technical assistance, may warrant a more in-depth treatment.

### **Consider updating the goals, objectives, and actions in the plan.**

One of the most important steps in plan revision is to update or refine the community's goals, objectives, and actions, particularly in light of experiences gained from implementing mitigation actions in the current plan. The planning team has undoubtedly learned something new about the state or community, the administration of government, or the value that the community places on certain objectives—all of which need to be included in a reevaluation of the strategies. As with every step in the planning process, updating goals and strategies should use consensus building and community-driven prioritization methods, which are explained in *Getting Started* (FEMA 386-1) and *Developing the Mitigation Plan* (FEMA 386-3).

Using the information gleaned in Step 3, and your results from Task B, the planning team should discuss what actions should be undertaken, reconsidered, or even eliminated, to further the plan's goals. This discussion should result in a preliminary list of alternative mitigation actions to incorporate into the update of the plan. As in any other step of the planning process, the community should be engaged in reviewing these alternatives. The planning team may choose to present these alternatives in a public forum at this stage or as part of the plan review process discussed in Task C. For more details on researching alternatives, see Phase 3, Step 2 of *Developing the Mitigation Plan* (FEMA 386-3).

Important questions to discuss with the team include the following:

***1. Are the goals and objectives still applicable? Have any changes in the state or community made the goals or objectives obsolete or irrelevant?***

Review the findings of changes in the community, including changes that your mitigation initiatives have brought, to determine whether you have met your goals and if they remain consistent with current conditions. If you determine that you need to add new



goals to the plan, see Phase 3, Step 1 of *Developing the Mitigation Plan* (FEMA 386-3) for formulating goal statements.

### ***2. Do the plan's priorities correspond with state priorities?***

Where applicable, make sure your actions are consistent with any changes to state priorities. You will continue to be aligned with state goals and priorities by doing this.

### ***3. Do existing actions need to be reprioritized for implementation?***

Now that you have implemented some of the actions, learned what works and doesn't, developed new actions, and discovered that some aspects of your community may have changed, you may need to reprioritize your actions. See *Developing the Mitigation Plan* (FEMA 386-3) for prioritizing methods.

### ***4. Are actions appropriate for available resources?***

Make sure that the community or state has enough resources to carry out the actions. You probably will have to research to find out what is currently available. Are past sources of funds still available? Are there new sources of funding that can be tapped? Are there new partnerships with nonprofit organizations or businesses that can be developed? What creative ways of implementing similar actions have other communities used? *Securing Resources for Mitigation Planning* (FEMA 386-9) covers these topics in greater detail.

#### **In order to remain eligible**

for disaster related funding, your updated local plan must be re-submitted to your state and/or FEMA Regional Office for review and approval every five years. State plans must be re-submitted to the FEMA Regional Office for review and approval every three years.

**DMA**

## **Task C. Incorporate your findings into the plan.**

Include your most recent findings about the community, tribe, or state, your hazards and vulnerabilities, as well as the applicable original actions of the plan, into a revised plan. Update your description of the planning process to include the steps you took to revise the plan document and how you involved the public. Update the implementation strategy to identify who will be responsible for the new or revised actions, the time frame, and funding sources.

The revised plan must be reviewed by all stakeholders in the community for its validity, and proceed through a formal adoption process as required by local or state laws.



Use **Worksheet #5: Revise the Plan** to help you keep track of where the plan document may require revisions.





**Worksheet #5****Revise the Plan****step 4**

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**Prepare to update the plan.***When preparing to update the plan:**Check the box when addressed:*

1. Gather information, including project evaluation worksheets, progress reports, studies, related plans, etc.	
Comments: <b>THORR must work with the Department of Public Works to update their progress reports and stream maintenance plans. While the department has been effectively conducting their new duties, it has been unable to attend to administrative paperwork such as preparing progress reports and formally updating its standard operating procedures.</b>	
2. Reconvene the planning team, making changes to the team composition as necessary (see results from Worksheet #2).	
Comments: <b>Invited Habitat for Humanity to participate in THORR.</b>	

**Consider the results of the evaluation and new strategies for the future.***When examining the community consider:**Check the box when addressed:*

1. The results of the planning and outreach efforts.	
Comments: <b>All but one of the the Raging River Views Park residents attended the design charette put on by the Department of Planning.</b>	
<i>[Note: The information here only pertains to the one project highlighted in this guide. When actually completing the worksheet, you will reflect on all projects.]</i>	
2. The results of the mitigation efforts.	
Comments: <b>The mitigation efforts have gone as planned, except the team was unable to obtain the cooperation of the remaining Raging River Views Park residents.</b>	
<i>[Note: The information here only pertains to the one project highlighted in this guide. When actually completing the worksheet, you will reflect on all projects.]</i>	



3. Shifts in development trends.	✓
Comments: The continued unwillingness of the Council to adopt hazard-based zoning will continue to be an issue. The reauthorization and funding of the economic development program encourages development in hazard areas. Recent development along the coast has not taken into account coastal storm hazards.	
4. Areas affected by recent disasters.	✓
Comments: Coastal windstorms have continued to erode the hillside surrounding the lighthouse.	
5. The recent magnitude, location, and type of the most recent hazard or disaster.	✓
Comments: The spring coastal storm of 2002 was estimated by NOAA to have a 25-year recurrence interval and accelerated beach erosion in several areas.	
6. New studies or technologies.	✓
Comments: THORR is currently conducting a study to determine best mitigation methods for retrofitting historic structures in the downtown district.	
7. Changes in local, state, or federal laws, policies, plans, priorities, or funding.	✓
Comments: See #3.	





8. Changes in the socioeconomic fabric of the community.	✓
Comments: <b>Most new residents along the coast are retired professionals and are new to the area.</b>	
9. Other changing conditions.	✓
Comments: <b>None</b>	

### Incorporate your findings into the plan.

*When examining the plan consider:*

*Check the box when addressed:*

1. Revisit the risk assessment. (See Worksheet #4)	✓
Comments: <b>Acquisition of structures in the Raging River Views Park decreases the potential flood losses. Vulnerability assessment and loss data will be incorporated into the plan.</b>	
2. Update your goals and strategies.	✓
Comments: <b>N/A</b>	
3. Recalculate benefit-cost analyses of projects to prioritize action items.	✓
Comments: <b>N/A</b>	



Use the following criteria to evaluate the plan:

Criteria	YES	NO	Solution
Are the goals still applicable?	✓		
Have any changes in the state or community made the goals obsolete or irrelevant?		✓	
Do existing actions need to be reprioritized for implementation?	✓		Staffing at the Department of Public Works is a high priority.
Do the plan's priorities correspond with state priorities?	✓		
Can actions be implemented with available resources?		✓	Need to identify funding for additional staff at the Department of Public Works.

Comments:

None

## Summary

In order for the plan to remain a viable tool for your state, tribe, or community, you must regularly review your planning process and mitigation strategy. Communities are rarely static and new challenges will arise during every revision of the plan. Disasters also present a window of opportunity to evaluate the relative success of the mitigation plan. States, tribes, and communities should take advantage of funding that becomes available as a result of these events.

Revising the plan ensures it remains up-to-date and relevant, providing a good return on the time and resources invested in developing it.

# The Hazardville Post

Vol. CXVII No. 16

Thursday, January 16, 2007

## The Hazard Mitigation Planning Cycle Set to Begin Again

(Part 4 of a 4-Part Series on the Hazard Mitigation Implementation Process)

**[Hazardville, EM]** A strategic planning meeting to update the Hazardville Hazard Mitigation Plan was held Wednesday at the Town Hall. The Town of Hazardville Organization for Risk Reduction (THORR), continuing in its planning capacity, led the strategy session by explaining to the community the changes the town has undergone since the initial adoption of the plan in 2003.

The first meeting was to review the results of the community per-

ception survey and to discuss the status of the mitigation actions that were prioritized in the town's mitigation plan. "Overall, our residents now seem to be more aware of the hazards to which the town is vulnerable, and a large majority of the survey respondents knew what they could do to reduce their own vulnerability," said Joe Norris, lead planner for THORR. "With the exception of the Town Hall seismic retrofit project, we are proud to inform the community that our

projects are all progressing as scheduled and under budget."

"We promised to make this community a safer place to live and work, and we will continue to strive to achieve this for our community," Mayor McDonald said at a press briefing yesterday. "That promise means we must diligently prepare for and mitigate against the many hazards our community is vulnerable to. Accountability and diligence are key to making this a reality."





## You have a mitigation plan. Now what?

**T**he first plan your state, tribe, or community adopts establishes a baseline from which to measure progress. As you implement and evaluate actions, your knowledge of hazards and how to best reduce your vulnerabilities increases tremendously. In order to effectively monitor your progress, it is important to take advantage of the worksheets provided in the how-to series. Over time, new partners will become involved in the planning process, providing additional reservoirs of experience and support. Since the political and social arenas, as well as the natural environment, are continually changing, you must periodically revisit and update your plan. As your plan evolves over time, you should see a corresponding improvement in your state, tribe, or community's resilience to the damaging effects of disasters.



